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Nationwide teacher shortage affecting Peoria schools

By WEEK Producer

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PEORIA, Ill. -- Not enough addition and too much subtraction from the classroom. The U.S. is in the midst of a nationwide teacher shortage, and it's causing problems for schools right here in central Illinois.

17,000 fewer Illinois high school graduates said they were interested in an



education major in 2014, compared to 2010, according to a recent study done by the Illinois Association of Regional Superintendents of Schools.

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More than half of Illinois school districts reported difficulty finding qualified applicants to fill open teaching jobs.

Bradley University Education Major, Katelyn Cook, will start student-teaching this semester at Metamora High School.

She is double-certified for teaching grades 6-12, but she hopes a national teacher shortage will help broaden her chances of landing a job.

"When you have those layoffs, it is kind of scary," said Cook. "It kind of pushes a lot of people away from being teachers because maybe raises isn't what they want or maybe there are a lot of unemployment problems. This new study, however, I feel will provide a lot more opportunity within the education department and it looks like there is a lot of growth."

Professors at Bradley University said, right now, the demand for teachers is at an all-time high.

They had 80 fewer education majors in the fall compared to 2013.

They expect that trend to turn around in the next two years because of an improving economy and a new curriculum for common core state standards.

"It's a more stable landscape," said Bradley University Professor and Chair of Teacher Education, Dr. Dean Cantu. "That, too, will encourage people to get into education."

Meanwhile, Cook said she will take any job she can get after she graduates in May.

She hopes she can inspire them like her high school teacher did for her.

"I hope they remember me," said Cook. "I want to be a teacher they can come to and have a great classroom environment. That's something I really strive for."

District 150 also has a teacher shortage. They currently have 32 open teaching jobs, which is five more than last year.

School officials said they have not cut any jobs since last spring.

They are mainly having shortage problems due to retirement.

"We have a nice group of people that have been teaching for a long time. It's time for them to retire, and they are exiting now. But we are not replenishing that same number," said District 150 Interim Superintendent Dr. Sharon Kherat.

District 150 hopes to use recruitment fairs to hire more teachers. They found 13 potential candidates that way last year.

<http://www.cinewsnow.com/news/local/Nationwide-teacher-shortage-affecting-Peoria-schools-365286741.html>